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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

**A2336 ~ Leaders in Israel.**

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*Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.*

After being crowned king of Judah at the young age of seven, King Joash followed the advice of the high priest, Jehoiada, and encouraged the people of Judah to worship the Lord God. When he became an adult, Joash noticed how shabby and in need of repairs that the Temple of God had become. It had been over 100 years since his ancestor King Solomon had built it. Furthermore, wicked Queen Athaliah's sons had damaged the Temple in disrespect. So firstly, Joash asked the Levites to collect money from the people to pay for the repairs, but after a while, Joash considered that things were moving too slowly, so he asked Jehoiada to make things happen faster.

Jehoiada the high priest had a box made, which he set outside the gate of the Temple. An announcement went throughout Judah and Jerusalem for the people to bring the collection that Moses had imposed on the people of Israel in their wilderness days. Judah's leaders and people rejoiced to be able to do this, and brought their contributions to the box. This money was used to pay for materials and workmen who would do their repair work. In 2nd Kings, Chapter 12, it says that the workmen weren't required to give an account of the money they received from the construction supervisors, as they were honest and trustworthy men.

When the repair work was completed, there was still money left over and this was used to make new utensils for the worship services. Sometime after this, Jehoiada died at the grand old age of 130 years. He'd been much loved by the people and they buried him in the tombs of the kings. He was succeeded by his son, Zechariah. With Jehoiada's death, King Joash lost his mentor and soon, he strayed from his previously straight spiritual path.

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When King Joash and the people turned away from worshipping God, the services in the temple ceased and idolatry again became Judah's focus. Although God had sent prophets to Judah to bring the people back to Himself, the people hadn't listened or repented from their idol worship. This is recorded in 2nd Chronicles, Chapter 24.

Joash's wickedness reached its climax when he ordered Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, to be stoned to death. Zechariah had previously warned the people that because they'd forsaken God, God would now abandon them. Joash had forgotten or chosen to ignore the kindness Jehoiada had shown him all during the early years of his reign. As Zechariah lay dying while being stoned, he said to Joash: "May the Lord see this and call you to account."

God sent Hazael, the king of Aram or Syria, to punish Joash and the people. As Hazael already controlled most of the northern kingdom of Israel, he moved on to attack the Philistine city of Gath and captured it, before turning his attention to Jerusalem. Although he had come with only a small army, Hazael easily overcame the much larger army of Judah, thus bringing on Judah one of the punishments that Moses had warned would come on those who broke God's covenant.

With Jerusalem about to fall to the Syrian army, Joash took from the temple every valuable article that had been dedicated to the Lord and sent them all to Hazael as a bribe. Only then did Hazael agree to withdraw from the city. But before the fighting was halted, Joash was severely wounded. Although it was probable that Joash would die from his wounds, some of his officials conspired against him and assassinated him while he lay in his bed. They killed him because he'd murdered Zechariah the priest. Because Joash had done so many evil things, his body wasn't buried in the tombs of the kings either. What a sad ending to a life that had started out so well!

What can we learn from Joash's life? His reign over Judah went well while he had his mentor, the high priest, overseeing him. We all need mentors and guides in our lives, and these are usually parents, relatives, trusted friends, pastors and counsellors. All of these people need to be faithful believers in Christ themselves or else we cannot be confident that their counsel is from God. Even as we get older and become mentors ourselves, we mustn't ever think that we can 'stand alone' as Christians; God has placed us in families and in churches so that we can receive and offer support and nurture between one another.

Joash's life also teaches us that we cannot live on another person's faith. Joash's faith depended on Jehoiada's faith and when he was gone, Joash's faith, if it ever existed, crumbled. Jehoiada may have overprotected Joash and never given him a chance to develop spiritually on his own. But one thing is certain: Joash didn't maintain whatever faith he had and as a result, he quickly descended deeper and deeper into sin. His sins were not Jehoiada's fault; they were his own.

Joash's son, Amaziah, became king of Judah. Soon after his kingship was established, Amaziah executed the officials who had killed his father. But he obeyed the law of Moses and never killed their families. There's a principle here: it wasn't the place of Joash's officials to kill him in revenge for killing Zechariah. In Deuteronomy, Chapter 32, the Lord says: "I will take revenge; I will pay them back. In due time their feet will slip, their day of disaster will arrive and their destiny will overtake them."

The parallel verse in the New Testament is in Romans, Chapter 12: "Never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God." Since God is going to take up your cause and see to it that justice is done, you can lay it down at His feet and leave it all to Him. You don't have to carry anger, bitterness, resentment or revenge in your heart while you wait for God to act either. Indeed, you dare not. Take heed, for Jesus warned that an unforgiving heart will destroy any one of us in the end.

The new King Amaziah did what was pleasing the Lord to some extent, but he didn't stop the people worshipping idols. During his 29-year reign, the prophet Elisha died.

Sometime after this, when Amaziah heard of a plot to kill him, he fled from Jerusalem to another city, but his enemies caught up with him and they killed him there.

Amaziah's son, Uzziah or also pronounced, Azariah, reigned over Judah for 52 years, from 792 BC to 740 BC and from the age of 16. King Uzziah followed the advice of his advisor, Zechariah; worshipped the Lord himself but he didn't destroy the heathen places of worship that the people were using. He encouraged the people to farm the land and he had many flocks and herds himself. And the Lord gave Uzziah a time of relative peace and prosperity.

During his reign, Uzziah defeated the Philistines, a group of the Arabs, and another group of Edomites. The Ammonites paid tribute to him, and he built up the cities of Judah and kept an army ready with weapons. However, when Uzziah became strong in his possessions, he also became proud. On one occasion, he went into the Temple of God to burn incense, even though only the priests were allowed to do that. The priests ordered Uzziah to leave, but this made Uzziah angry. But before he could do anything, the Lord struck Uzziah with leprosy on his forehead and the priests rushed him outside of God's holy sanctuary. As a result, Uzziah lived the rest of his life in isolation and his son, Jotham, acted as his regent. In the year of Uzziah's death, God called Isaiah to become His prophet, as listed in the Bible book of Isaiah, Chapter 6.

Jothan, Uzziah's son, was one of Judah's better kings. He grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the Lord. However, many of the people still continued to worship idols. What's the lesson we can learn from all these kings? Those who followed the Lord humbly and faithfully were blessed with God's protection. But those kings who turned aside to worship idols brought disaster on themselves and the people.

Joash questioned why God allowed certain troubles to come upon him and people today are still asking: "Why did a loving God allow this bad thing to happen to them … or someone in their family?" The situation might be serious illness or some relative is killed in an accident, or a natural disaster like an earthquake. The plain truth is that we all, Christians and non-Christians alike, live in a cursed world. Adam and Eve, when living in the perfect Garden of Eden, brought a curse on themselves and all future humanity because they disobeyed God's single rule for living in the garden. In Genesis, Chapter 3, God also cursed the ground so that it would grow thorns and thistles. From then on, they would have to work hard to grow their own food.

But Christians have hope that one day, as promised in Revelation, Chapter 22, our Creator God is going to recreate the world as it was in the beginning, and do away with all those things related to the curse of sin. In Titus, Chapter 2, it says: "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds."

Because each of us doesn't know the day we'll be called to stand before our Maker, either in death or on the day He calls us out of this sinful world to be with Him for ever, we need to be ready at all times to meet Him. Romans, Chapter 10, Verses 9 and 10, says: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved." Are you ready for His call to meet Him? Make preparations today!

*The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.*

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